

APRIL 12, 2000

**SCHAKOWSKY TESTIFIES BEFORE KEY FUNDING COMMITTEE TO URGE MORE MONEY FOR CHILD CARE SERVICES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education to urge Congress to increase funding for child care services. Below is Schakowsky's statement.

*"I would like to thank Chairman Young, Chairman Porter, Congressman Obey and members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to address the child care crisis that exists in our nation today. Your interest and commitment to exploring the issues and problems facing women is important and worthy of our time and attention.*

*"A recent Report on child care issued by the National Council of Jewish Women found that for millions of American families the lack of affordable, quality child care remains a pervasive problem. The Report found shrinking access to quality, affordable care nationwide, and even if parents could find slots for their children, many would encounter quality of care that is often substandard. In addition, the cost of child care -even poor-quality child care-is a concern for parents in all social strata, and when women have to leave the workforce because they cannot afford or find quality care, their departure has an impact on the nation's productivity and economic well-being.*

*"Nationally, more than 50 percent of preschool children are in child care arrangements. In Illinois, the most recent data shows that three out of five children younger than six-and half of all children younger than three-spend some or all of their day being cared for by someone other than their parents. And it is not uncommon for children to enter care as early as six weeks of age and to continue in care for 40 hours a week until they reach school age.*

*"Regarding the quality of child care, recent research on early brain development has heightened interest in the experiences of children in child care settings, particularly infants and very young children. Quality issues include the training, qualifications and compensation of caregivers, group size and caregiver/child ratios, and curriculum. Quality child care is out of reach for many working families and even when parents are lucky enough to find a child care slot, too many children are in care that may be harmful to their development, health and safety.*

*"I urge the committee to provide the \$817 million increase in the Child Care and Development Block Grant's (CCDBG) discretionary funds included in the President's budget. This funding increase would be sufficient to serve 253,000 additional children and is vital to helping low-income, working parents afford quality child care. The*

*average annual cost of child care ranges from over \$3,000 to almost \$8,000 per child. In Illinois, the statewide average cost is \$6,987 and in Cook County, the average is \$8,268, far beyond the reach of low- and moderate-income families. At current funding levels, the CCDBG serves only one in ten eligible children. We can and we must do better."*